



## MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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### MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

FROM:  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Executive Officer

DATE: April 5, 2006

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item XIII: Consideration of resolution authorizing entering into a Project Agreement with the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District to use 5th Supervisorial District Proposition A Excess Funds to acquire the Rio Dulce Ranch, approximately 1,015 acres, Soledad Canyon watershed, unincorporated Los Angeles County.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing entering into a Project Agreement with the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District to use 5th Supervisorial District Proposition A Excess Funds to acquire the Rio Dulce Ranch, approximately 1,015 acres, Soledad Canyon watershed, unincorporated Los Angeles County.

Background: The subject property known as Rio Dulce Ranch, comprised of approximately 1,015 acres, is located south of State Route 14 (Antelope Valley Freeway), by Agua Dulce Canyon Road, north of the Santa Clara River, in the Soledad Canyon/Santa Clara River watershed. The Assessor's parcel numbers are provided in an attachment and the attached figure shows the location. The MRCA owns over 260 acres along the eastern boundary of the subject holding. Numerous Bureau of Land Management (BLM) parcels are also in the immediate vicinity.

The property is being sold by auction in May 2006. The proposed action would authorize entering into a project agreement with the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District (District) to use 5th Supervisorial District Proposition A Excess Funds to acquire this property in concert with at least three other funding sources. The other funding sources would be the Santa Clarita River Watershed Recreation and Conservation Authority, the Wildlife Conservation Board, MRCA in lieu mitigation fees, and possibly an additional grant from the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy.

Earlier this year, the MRCA authorized entering into a project agreement with the District to use Proposition A Excess Funds for the northeastern-most parcel east of Agua Dulce Canyon Road. Also this year, the MRCA authorized the use of various

mitigation funds to acquire this same parcel that is critical to wildlife movement under State Route 14.

The attached brochure regarding the auction describes much about the property. The majority of the property is made up of a core irregularly-shaped 883 acres. Another five-acre parcel and another area of 98 acres lies to the south of the main Ranch just north of Soledad Canyon Road. Another 26-acre parcel is located to the west of Aqua Dulce Canyon Road, at the exit ramp from State Highway 14. Briggs Road, an unpaved easement, passes through the two largest groups of parcels between Aqua Dulce Canyon Road and Soledad Canyon Road. According to the sales brochure, there are no structures on the property except for electrical transmission towers which cross the northern portion of the property.

The terrain varies from mountainous slopes and ridges to level valley bottoms. Because of the higher elevations, the property provides far-reaching views of the surrounding canyons and the San Gabriel Mountains. Vegetation consists mainly of sage, yucca, and junipers. The property is central to the multi-agency Conceptual Area Protection Plan (CAPP) submitted to the California Department of Fish and Game last year. The CAPP provides a realistic acquisition plan to connect the two portions of the Angeles National Forest across State Route 14 (San Gabriel to Sierra Pelona ranges). The Pacific Crest Trail is located a short distance from the Rio Dulce Ranch and is connected via the Briggs Edison road. A minimum of six USGS blueline streams course through the subject property.

Staff is working on the acquisition with the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy staff. The RMC staff has ordered the complete information package on the auction process and the properties.

Fifth Supervisorial District Excess Funds can only be spent in District Five. Expenditure of the subject sub-account of excess funds requires consensus between the MRCA and the 5<sup>th</sup> District Supervisor, and subsequent Board of Supervisors approval. The use of these funds has not been approved yet by the 5th District Supervisor.